

Testimony of Name: James Turner
Title: Communications Director
Horizons, Incorporated,
South Windham, Connecticut
to the Appropriations Committee
An Act Concerning the Governor's Proposed
FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget
March 6, 2015

TO: Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Jim Turner and I am the Communications Director at Horizons -- a private nonprofit agency located in South Windham. Our agency has been in operation for 36 years and provides individualized supports and services for people with special needs where they live, learn, work, and play. Horizons is a member of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits.

I write to you in opposition to the Governor's Proposed FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget.

I recently read newspaper articles regarding the governor's budget. Over the next two years the governor proposes cuts to the Employment and Day Services budget by \$30 million, Residential Services by \$23 million, and Transition Education by \$36 million; also, previous recessions are annualized – costing private providers \$21 million over those same two years.

These proposed budget cuts will have a major effect on my life and the lives of the people I support. These cuts reflect a sentiment in the government that the work I do is menial labor; however, I am here to tell this committee that the governor's office grossly underestimates the value of my work. I am a skilled professional in my occupation of choice.

As a professional, I am required to have the following trainings: CPR, first aid, basic health, dysphasia, sign language, water/fire/safety, human rights, positive practices, hazardous materials, communicable disease control, defensive driving, abuse and neglect, THERAP documentation, agency policies and procedures, and physical and psychological management training.

Working for a nonprofit in human services essentially makes me a contracted employee of the State of Connecticut. Despite this relationship between the State and private providers, Horizons' personnel reap far less benefits from the State than public employees. For instance, the final FY 2014 state budget included a 3 percent COLA for

State employees in human services; however, employees of private providers only saw a 1 percent increase in wages in the same budget. The 1% was initially only given for 1/2 of the year making it even less money but wait, then due to the rescissions from the Governor we actually receive NOTHING! So I took a net loss in wages.

In light of these facts, I ask this Committee, the Connecticut General Assembly, and Governor Malloy to discard the proposed cuts to DDS' budget. These proposed cuts threaten my economic security and would diminish private providers' ability to retain well-trained staff. I hope the Appropriations Committee considers my testimony when drafting their budget and when negotiating with OPM and the governor about budget cuts.

Thank you.